

National Minimum Standards

Standard	Supporting Criteria
<p>The local authority has a written statement or plan, which sets out its duties and functions in relation to private fostering and the ways in which they will be carried out</p>	<p>The statement or plan includes:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the legal definition of a privately fostered child and a list of examples</li> <li>• the local authority’s duties and functions under the Children Act 1989 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005, and how they will operate in relation to privately fostered children</li> <li>• how relevant staff will be trained to ensure they have appropriate understanding and expertise in relation to private fostering</li> <li>• the name of a person within the local authority with expertise in private fostering whom social workers can contact for advice</li> <li>• the name of the manager(s) who will sign-off decisions about the overall suitability of an arrangement</li> <li>• how awareness of the notification requirements will be promoted with other agencies and within the wider local community</li> <li>• how the local authority will determine the suitability of all aspects of a private fostering arrangement in accordance with the regulations</li> <li>• how the local authority will satisfy itself that the welfare of privately fostered children in their area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted</li> <li>• the advice and support that will be available to private foster carers (including prospective private foster carers), parents and others with parental responsibility, and others concerned with the privately fostered child;</li> <li>• the information and support that will be available to privately fostered children</li> <li>• any training that may be available to private foster carers (including prospective private foster carers)</li> <li>• the role of other agencies in assisting the local authority to carry out its duty under section 67(1) of the Children Act 1989, in particular through notifying the authority of an arrangement where they are not satisfied that the local authority have been, or will be, notified of that arrangement.</li> <li>• All relevant staff have an appropriate understanding of the local authority’s duties and functions in relation to private fostering</li> <li>• The local authority ensures that its duties and functions in relation to private fostering are included in induction and other training programmes. The programmes are annually reviewed in line with changes in legislation and/or guidance and regularly evaluated by staff and managers</li> </ul>

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Supporting Criteria</b>
<p>The local authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promotes awareness of the notification requirements and ensures that those professionals who may come into contact with privately fostered children understand their role in notification</li> <li>• deals with situations where an arrangement comes to their attention, which has not been notified</li> <li>• responds effectively to notifications</li> </ul>	<p><b>Promoting Awareness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The local authority has a programme of communication activities, including for the public, local authority staff and other agencies, and a range of up to date publicity materials which includes the legal definition of a privately fostered child with examples, the notification requirements and the procedure for notifying, and the benefits of notification and possible consequences of non-notification</li> <li>• The publicity materials identify who to contact in the local authority for information about notification or about other aspects of private fostering. The publicity materials are available in an appropriate range of languages and formats, which are accessible to different groups of private foster carers, parents and communities</li> <li>• The local authority provides targeted and current information to those who may come into contact with privately fostered children, including teachers, health visitors, nurses, doctors, housing officers and community workers, about their role in assisting the local authority to carry out its duty under section 67(1) of the Children Act 1989, including through notifying the local authority of an arrangement where they are not satisfied that the local authority have been, or will be, notified of that arrangement</li> </ul> <p><b>Responding to Notifications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The local authority takes appropriate action on receipt of a notification, and carries out subsequent visits, in accordance with the regulations</li> <li>• The local authority handles disqualifications effectively</li> <li>• The local authority has in place and implements effectively a policy and agreed process for prohibiting private fostering arrangements and for imposing requirements where appropriate</li> <li>• Where the local authority is not satisfied that the welfare of a privately fostered child is being, or will be, satisfactorily safeguarded or promoted, it takes reasonable steps to secure that the child is looked after by a parent or relative of his, or someone else with parental responsibility for him (unless this would not be in the best interests of the child); and considers the extent to which (if at all) it should exercise any of its functions under the Children Act 1989 with respect to the child</li> <li>• The local authority handles effectively appeals against relevant decisions, including to refuse to consent to a disqualified person privately fostering a child and to impose a prohibition or a requirement</li> </ul> <p><b>Responding to Un-notified Arrangements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The local authority deals effectively with situations where a private fostering arrangement has come to their attention but has not been notified in accordance with the regulations, and ensures that an appropriate decision is taken where it appears that an offence has been committed, bearing in mind the best interests of the individual child</li> </ul>

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Supporting Criteria</b>
<p>The local authority determines effectively the suitability of all aspects of the private fostering arrangement in accordance with the regulations.</p>	<p>The local authority establishes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that the intended duration of a private fostering arrangement is understood and agreed between the parent and the private foster carer</li> <li>• the ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child about the proposed/actual private fostering arrangement</li> <li>• that the child's physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development is appropriate and satisfactory (once the private fostering arrangement has begun) that the child's needs arising from his religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background are being met (once the private fostering arrangement has begun)</li> <li>• that financial arrangements for the care and maintenance of the child have been agreed between the parents and private foster carer and that, once the private fostering arrangement has begun, these arrangements are working</li> <li>• the capacity of the proposed/actual private foster carer to look after the child, and the suitability of members of their household and premises (including whether the private foster carer or anyone in the household is disqualified from privately fostering children)</li> <li>• that consideration has been given, and necessary steps taken to make arrangements for the care of the child's health; and that, once the private fostering arrangement has begun, these arrangements are in place and, in particular, that the child is included on a GP's list;</li> <li>• that consideration has been given, and necessary steps taken to make arrangements for the child's education; and that, once the private fostering arrangement has begun, these arrangements are in place</li> <li>• the standard of care provided for each privately fostered child</li> <li>• whether the contact arrangements have been agreed and understood, and will be/are satisfactory for the child</li> <li>• how decisions about the child's day to day care will be/are being taken</li> <li>• the local authority assesses the capacity of the proposed or actual private foster carer to look after the child and the suitability of household members, and determines whether the child who is, or is proposed to be, privately fostered poses any risk of harm to children already living in the private foster carer's household, and whether those children pose a risk of harm to him, using the dimensions and domains in the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (2000)</li> <li>• Decisions about the overall suitability of arrangements are made within required timescales, and signed-off at managerial level</li> <li>• Where the local authority has concerns that the child may not be achieving a satisfactory level of health or development without the provision of services, an assessment is undertaken under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, in accordance with the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (2000)</li> </ul>

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Supporting Criteria</b>
<p>The local authority provides such advice and support to private foster carers and prospective private foster carers as appears to the authority to be needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private foster carers and prospective private foster carers are enabled to obtain information about entitlement to child and other financial benefits, and any necessary advice and support which will assist them to safeguard and promote the welfare of the privately fostered child</li> <li>• Private foster carers and prospective private foster carers are provided with information, in different languages and formats as appropriate, on the advice and support that is available from other agencies, including health services, education, housing services, youth support services, voluntary organisations and community groups</li> <li>• Private foster carers are encouraged, and where necessary supported, to promote and facilitate regular contact between the child and his parents, siblings, extended family and other significant persons, where this will promote the child's welfare</li> <li>• Where appropriate, the private foster carer is given advice about the child's needs arising from religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background</li> <li>• Where appropriate, the private foster carer is given advice to enhance his/her ability to care effectively for the child, including in relation to sex, age, disability, medical condition and learning disabilities, and the opportunity to utilise any training or support services that may be available</li> <li>• Private foster carers are provided with the contact details of the social worker who will be visiting them and the child they are privately fostering, and whom they can contact at any time if they have any concerns about the welfare of the child or if they wish to request a visit</li> </ul>
<p>The local authority provides advice and support to the parents of children who are privately fostered within their area as appears to the authority to be needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The local authority in each case considers whether in the light of the particular circumstances, the direct provision of services or referral to another agency would remove the necessity for the parent to have the child privately fostered and, where feasible and in the child's best interests and with the parents' consent, provides such services or makes such a referral</li> <li>• Parents are provided with information, in different languages and formats as appropriate, on the advice and support that may be available from the authority itself and from other agencies</li> <li>• Parents who have placed a child with a private foster carer are encouraged to maintain regular contact with their child and the private foster carer.</li> <li>• Parents are provided with advice and support to make alternative arrangements for the care of their child, where a private fostering arrangement has been prohibited and no other is contemplated</li> <li>• Parents are provided with the contact details of an allocated social worker who they can contact if they have any concerns about the welfare of the privately fostered child or if they wish to request a visit</li> </ul>
<p>Children who are privately fostered are able to access information and support when required so that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted. Privately fostered children are enabled to participate in decisions about their lives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Privately fostered children are provided with information, in formats appropriate to their age and level of understanding, about their private foster carer and his responsibilities, the meaning of their privately fostered status, and their right to be safeguarded</li> <li>• Privately fostered children are provided with the contact details of the social worker who will be visiting them while they are privately fostered, and whom they can contact at any time if they have any concerns about their care or if they wish to request a visit</li> <li>• Privately fostered children are given information about advocacy services, if they are assessed as being a child in need</li> <li>• The local authority automatically provides, in an appropriate format, to every disabled privately fostered child nearing age 18 details of its procedure for assessing eligibility for adult community care services, so that these assessments can take place in a timely manner</li> <li>• The local authority provides information in appropriate formats about its arrangements for providing advice and assistance to privately fostered children who would be "qualifying" children as defined by Section 24(2)(e) of the Children Act 1989</li> </ul>

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Supporting Criteria</b>
<p>The local authority has in place and implements effectively a system for monitoring the way in which it discharges its duties and functions in relation to private fostering.</p> <p>It improves practice where this is indicated as necessary by the monitoring system.</p>	<p>Accurate, comprehensive, well-organised and confidential records are kept for each privately fostered child and each private foster carer. These cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all the matters to which the local authority has to satisfy itself in carrying out its functions under the Children Act 1989 and the 2005 regulations;</li> <li>• any disqualifications, and any prohibitions or requirements imposed on private foster carers</li> <li>• decisions about offences and whether to consent or refuse to consent to a disqualified person privately fostering a child</li> <li>• any advice and support given to parents and/or carers</li> <li>• any information and support given to children</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The records contain the written reports required by the regulations. These reports include the conclusions drawn, whether the child was seen alone and, where appropriate, the reasons why the officer considered it inappropriate to see the child alone; and the child's wishes and feelings about the arrangement. They comment on the child's welfare and whether the placement is satisfactory, and include any comments about these matters made by the child or the carer. Any matter for concern is highlighted</li> <li>• Records are kept and monitored about the numbers of privately fostered children and private foster carers living in the local authority's area</li> <li>• New notifications are recorded on the statistical data return PFI, and submitted to the DCSF, as required</li> <li>• There is a system for recording the number and nature of enquiries received in relation to private fostering, the responses given and any action taken</li> <li>• The local authority regularly reviews a sample of individual child and private foster carer records in order to check such matters as: compliance with required timescales for action to be taken on receipt of a notification, decisions about the overall suitability of arrangements and subsequent visits; that additional visits are made if reasonably requested by private foster carers, privately fostered children or their parents; that children are seen alone, unless it is considered inappropriate (and with an independent interpreter where the child's preferred language is English); that written reports are made in accordance with the regulations; that decisions about the suitability of arrangements are signed-off at managerial level; that any concerns raised by privately fostered children are addressed; and the satisfactory operation of all its procedures, and the effectiveness of its actions, in relation to private fostering</li> <li>• The local authority investigates any pattern of concern raised by privately fostered children; and takes action to improve practice in the interests of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of privately fostered children where this is indicated as necessary by monitoring information</li> <li>• The local authority provides a written report each year, for consideration by the Director of Children's Services, which includes an evaluation of the outcomes of its work in relation to privately fostered children within its area</li> <li>• The local authority reports annually to the Chair the Local Safeguarding Children Board on how it satisfies itself that the welfare of privately fostered children in its area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted, including how it co-operates with other agencies in this connection</li> </ul>